

Diurnal Activities of the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus virginianus*).—The observations here given were made from or near my home, which has a prairie location a mile and a half from the woods, that form the western boundary of the timber belt along the Mississippi River. There are many farm clearings near the river, but the western edge of the forest remains uncleared, and in its original untamed condition throughout a strip varying from a mile to three miles in width. In it various solitude-loving species, such as the Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Pileated Woodpecker, and Great Horned Owl still flourish. To reach my neighborhood the last named species must cross a treeless area two miles wide, unless sometimes it hides in evergreen trees that have been planted in yards. During the past winter these owls have been observed much more frequently than in previous seasons; sometimes in the night, but more often by day—in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and in the early evening. In the woods in spring and summer it is not an uncommon experience to meet them abroad in the daytime. A neighbor informs me that early in February he saw five of these great birds sitting at the same time in a large water-elm, that is growing on the Mississippi River bottom lands.

At 1.30 o'clock in the afternoon of November 8, 1911, a Great Horned Owl was discovered sitting on the ground in our front yard, where it remained an hour before put to flight by the cat. It sat in an open space, thirty-five feet from the house, and about that distance from the trunks of three evergreen trees. While there it disgorged a pellet, and it safeguarded its position by many watchful turnings of the head.

Just after sunset on December 3 I was halted in the middle of the road by the approach of one of these owls. Flying a little above the telephone wires it crossed the road about fifty yards ahead of me; wheeling it flew back over the road, turned, and again recrossed it, evidently hunting for rabbits that might be skulking beside the fences. Again another rabbit hunt of the Great Horned Owl was watched for a half hour on January 20. It was first seen at three o'clock in the afternoon flying over a field whose covering of unsullied snow in the bright sunlight presented such a dazzling surface as might blind the strongest eyesight. It seemed a test of this species' power of vision that may well compare with the instance cited by Dr. Coues in which these owls watched two white cranes circling high in the air in the direct rays of the sun. Except for a few minutes when on two or three occasions the owl alighted on the snow it was in the air, beating back and forth over an area a little more than an eighth of a mile in length and a trifle less than that distance in width, having on its eastern border a fence and a short row of willow trees. The bird sometimes rose to a height of seventy-five feet, but maintained an altitude of forty feet or less the greater portion of the time. A half mile west of this locality that morning two school-boys saw two of these owls together, and a few days later three of them were seen flying about a solitary willow.

In this vicinity the only apparent check upon the Great Horned Owl

seems to come by way of the steel-trap, when the species becomes too familiar in the farmers' poultry yards. When skins are desired a good method of killing the trapped owls employed by two young farmers is that of smothering the birds in the oat-bin.—ALTHEA R. SHERMAN, *National, Iowa*.

Status of the Picidæ in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.— Personally, I have, to the date of writing, found five forms of Woodpecker in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, within the limits of Cameron county, they are:

1. *Dryobates scalaris symplectus*. Abundant resident.
2. *Sphyrapicus varius varius*. Common migrant and occasional winter sojourner.
3. *Centurus aurifrons*. Abundant resident.
4. *Colaptes auratus luteus*. Fall and winter visitant.
5. *Colaptes cafer collaris*. One record, ♂ Jan. 8, 1912, collected by myself, and now in collection of Dr. J. Dwight, Jr.

Possibly *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* occurs as a winter straggler, though I have not yet found it.

Indications point to the presence of another Woodpecker, as yet unrecorded by ornithologists. It is known to a number of the native Mexican hunters, who designate it as "carpentera grande"; and describe it as much over a foot in length; black, with scarlet crest: generally occurring during the warm season, and confined to the heaviest growth bordering the river. Totally absent some years. The season of occurrence would at once eliminate the possibility of it being *Asyndesmus levisi*; and the only other Woodpecker that seems to fit, even in fair degree, the description and conditions is *Phlæotomus scapularis*. This Mexican species ranges well up into the state of Tamaulipas, so it might furnish us stragglers now and then, as in the case with *Amizilis tzacall*, *Ceryle torquata*, *Trogon ambiguus*, etc.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Brownsville, Texas*.

Differences due to Sex in the Black Swift.—In the treatment accorded *Nephæcetes niger borealis* by Ridgway in the volume last published of his "Birds of North and Middle America" (vol. 5, 1911, pp. 703, 707), the sexes are declared to be different in markings, the adult male uniformly sooty underneath, the adult female with the feathers of the posterior underparts always more or less distinctly tipped with whitish. A different conclusion had been arrived at by Mr. Frank M. Drew (Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, VII, 1882, 182, 183), who declared that the fully mature female was indistinguishable in color from the male, four years being assumed to be the length of time required to attain this plumage. Mr. Ridgway cites Drew's plumage description in full, with the following comment: "Mr. Drew is undoubtedly mistaken, however, in assuming that the sexes are alike in coloration, for all the sexed specimens examined by me from whatever locality, show that all those with white-tipped feathers on posterior underparts are females and all those without these white-tipped feathers